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NEMO'S ALMANAC
2014

a literary competition in its 123rd year

She has her seasons, solstices,
Rich and sour, bright and black.
But though my system's Ptolemy's
I use her heart for almanac.

Edited by Nigel Forde
Price: £3.00

NEMO'S ALMANAC 2012

SEND TO NIGEL FORDE
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RULES

The quotations are to be identified by reference to author, work and, where appropriate, line number or number of chapter, act or scene. Ten marks are given for each answer with full references **including source**. Incomplete answers and guesses will receive marks on their merits. Extra marks will be given for answers found only by one or two competitors, also for exceptionally good answers, at the Editor's discretion.

2. The Prizes are book tokens of amounts dictated by the modest budget of the Almanac (this year these are £50, £40 and £30). No competitor may can take a first prize two years running, or any prize at all in the fourth year, after three years running.

3. Answers are to be typed or legibly written on one side of the paper only, leaving a margin for marks on the right hand side. Full name and address are to be written on the first page. The entry, should reach the editor not later than September 1st of the year on the cover.
Please mark your envelope "Nemo".

4. If a reasonably sized stamped addressed envelope is enclosed, entries will be returned with an answer sheet.

5. A pseudonym may be used, but prizewinners' names will be published.

6. No author is quoted more than once. No extract is in translation.

7. The editor's decision is final in every case.

January

1
the end may come, the seventh angel crowned with a rainbow,
one foot in flames on the Pacific Ocean, the other
burning without melting, light as a leaf on Silesian snow.

2
the demons in the bank-vaults peered out to see us pass,
and the angels in the trees, the angels in the grass,
the angels in the flags, peered out to see us pass.

3
When we look angels in the face
We smirk and gibber to the rear;
When the moon rises with our tears
Smiles make a sunset of our gaze.

4
Now angels, God's secret agents,
I am assured by Billy Graham,
circulate among us to tell
the living they are not alone.
On twenty-four-hour duty, angels
flutter around my house and barn
blundering into cobwebs

5
When Jesus Christ was four years old,
The angels brought Him toys of gold
Which no man ever had bought or sold.

6
— Our brains are seventy-year clocks. The Angel of Life winds them up once for all, then closes the case, and gives the key into the hand of the Angel of the Resurrection.

February

1
Upon a dark ball spun in Time
Stands a Giraffe beside a Tree:
Of what immortal stuff can that
The fading picture be?

2
He will forget the way to laugh,
Cut off by his mental reef
From music hall and tall giraffe

3
Nor is it nice
To give advice
On troubles of the spine—
The tall Giraffe
Enjoys a laugh,
But there he draws the line.

4
Herbivorous giraffe, in dappled love
With green and sunstruck edibles above,
Yearned with his bones; in an aeon or so,
His glad heart left his ankles far below,
And there, where forelegs turn to throat, it trem-
Bles like a blossom halfway up a stem.

5
You're probably still thinking that Noah, for all his faults, was basically some kind of early conservationist, that he collected the animals together because he didn't want them to die out, that he couldn't endure not seeing a giraffe ever again, that he was doing it for us. This wasn't the case at all.

6
One with the birds that are blue-egged because they love the sky!
With the flocks of giraffes craning towards the heavens!
With the peacocks dressed in their love for the high sun

March

1
But hark, the voice of War! Behold the Storm begin!
The Trumpets Clangor, speaks in loud Alarms,
Mingling shrill Notes, with dreadful Din
Of Cannons burst, and rattling clash of Arms.

2
After a war come the memorials —
tanks, cutlasses, men with cigars.
If women are there they adore
and are saved, shielding their children.

3
The men in the bureaus mating rubber stamps, carbonizing history,
The poets raving in their uncontestable ravening
The war poets who were ever at war
Before the wars, and after the wars

4
For wars his life and half a world away
The soldier sells his family and days.
He learns to fight for freedom and the State;
He sleeps with seven men within six feet.

5
The General at the radar screen
Rubbed his hands with glee
And grinning pressed the button
That started World War Three

6
What threat of War and War's deray
Hath shook your walls that yesterday
Heard merry-make and pipers play?

April

1
It quests you, Hamlet
Will you go
behind the arras
behind the tapestry
will you go
Hamlet
with all the weight
of your bright thought
upon you?

2
This stage is all the world: in all our hearts
  Rosalind smiles, Iago hates,
  Lear howls, Malvolio preens.

3
That oath, tempered in Hamlet's throat, is gong
To angels, demons,—both in ghast distraction!
And what of failure—so there's Ariel's song?

4
The man the bear rended tooth and nail
Was loyal Antigonus, the child Perdita,
One of the nicest heroines by far,
Too good to serve up as an ursine entrée—

5
Ophelia, Lear and Timon all go mad.
Yes, but their dying makes the audience glad,
Who see their separate letters burn away
First in a sentence then a paragraph
And lastly the whole bonfire of the play.

6
Prospero upon his island
Cast in a romantic form,
When his love was fully grown
He laid his magic down.

May

1
In this brown husk a dale of hawthorn dreams;
A cedar in this narrow cell is thrust
That will drink deeply of a century's streams;
These lilies shall make summer on my dust.

2
A labourer and architect,
He taught patience in slow lessons
And one man's dedication to a craft.
From his cracked hands I watched the brittle seed
Cast surely for the future, the unborn;
Those acts of affirmation his deep need.

3
A stunted thorn
Stands here and there, indeed; and from a pit
An oak uprises, springing from a seed
Dropped by some bird a hundred years ago.

4
With shrivelled hands he flung his seed,
Nor ever turned to look behind;
Of sight or sound he took no heed;
It seemed he was both deaf and blind.

5
And much grew from the labour, the mood, the seed;
Tomato, celery, salsify, cauliflower,
Lettuce, carrot, onion, okra, and chard,
Comfort and peace of mind, and a sense of power.

6
O had I lived when song was great
In days of old Amphion,
And ta'en my fiddle to the gate
Nor cared for seed or scion!

June

1
I and the patient Frank were wed
  Upon the self-same day.
And friends all round kissed either Bride,
  I Frank's, Frank mine; and he
Laughed as for once we thus defied
  Love's sweet monopoly.

2
The little girl who wept on the platform then
Now feels her body blossom like the trees,
Discovers tennis, poetry and flowers,
And under the dripping larches in the rain
Knows the first experiment of a kiss.

3
O kiss, which dost those ruddy gems impart,
Or gems or fruits of new-found Paradise,
Breathing all bliss and sweetning to the heart,
Teaching dumb lips a nobler exercise

4
From here you will see the sun rise over
The Heroes' Monument. If it does,
And you stay long enough for that, it will be
The first time we ever kiss in daylight.

5
Kisses should be articulate.
An open-mouthèd kiss speaks sense:
It is the lover's eloquence.
Let yours speak out, then! There's no bliss
To the pronunciation of a kiss.

6
In return for this, K____ bestowed on C_____ one of the prettiest presents in nature — the composite kiss, i.e., she imprinted on her cheek a single kiss, which said —

1. Quite correct.
2. Good, clever mother, for guessing so right and so quick.
3. How sweet for us twain to be of one mind again after never having been otherwise.
4. Etc.

July

1
Enjoy thy stream, O harmless fish;
And when an angler for his dish,
    Through gluttony's vile sin,
Attempts, a wretch, to pull thee OUT,
God give thee strength, O gentle trout,
  To pull the raskall IN!

2
                little frightened fishes
Flapping bewildered in a cheap whit net,
Then gliding in a water-filled jam jar;
Nudging their awkward heads against the glass,
Groping in vain for green and spacious freedom.

3
Fish pry around the stones that sink like lead
Beneath deep water when the rains are on:
Churning the mud as low winds turn the dust—
A subtle movement, curled, and swiftly gone.

4
Mud-eating mullets buried in crushed ice,
Tilefishes with scales like chickenfat,
Spanish mackerels, buttercups on the flanks,
Pot-bellied pikes, two-tone flounders
After the long contortion of pushing both eyes
To the brown side that they might look up

5
Primroses are out, lad.
  On the high banks of Lee,
And the sun stirs the trout, lad,
  From Brendon to the sea.

6
So that now, near closing-time,
I find that I still know nothing—
And am not even sorry that I know nothing—
About fish.

August

1
and though the men were dead or gone to Norwich
the women bedridden, the children married.
yet with the known road under my older feet
familiar cowsheds and remembered lanes
swooped back to me those misty years
when Hampshire was my home and London lovely.

2
Come
Home.

3
He came home. Came home? The house
Did not fit the garden, the view.
Their own, locked up in his absence?
Another she'd bought and unlocked?

4
'But thou art Death?' 'Of Heavenly Seraphim
None else to seek thee out and bid thee come.'
'I only care that thou art come from Him,
Unbody me — I'm tired— and get me home.'

5
He stands in the wilderness and cries I want
to go home, I want to go home
when he is home, a happy, protected child.

6
My married sister says there is no feast
Equal to sight of foreign bird or beast.
With her, in search of these I often roam:
My kinder parents make me blest at home.
Tir'd of excursions, visitings, and sights,
No joys are pleasing to these home delights.

September

1
Is there for such sorrow and love, Dowland, a tune
In your book? Heavy is it for lute to lift?
Yet must we make our poem of it and on the dune
Of this century scatter our sea-thrift.

2
Tallis is dead, and Music dies: dearest Ben
music lives, pity shall live. Sleep now as we
grieve and rejoice with your loved Purcell:
His star is set and shines beyond the sky.

3
"I would like modern music if I could; I have been trying all my life to like it, but I succeed less and less the older I grow."
"And pray, where do you consider modern music to begin?"
"With Sebastian Bach."
"And don't you like Beethoven?"
"No, I used to think I did, when I was younger, but I know now that I never really liked him."

4
From the orchestra of 1985
The 1911 Petruschka rises
Like Petrushka's ghost, yet sounding more alive
Than the score of Stravinsky's later revises.

5
Consider that radio, drifting through frequencies,
Suddenly articulate with Mozart.
Consider the soloist playing that cadenza,
Borne to the coda by his own hands.

6
And Nature's twin son, Pergolesi; and Bach
Old father of Fugues, with his endless fine talk;
And Gluck, who saw Gods; and the learned sweet feeling
Of Handel; and Winter, whose sorrows are healing;
And gentlest Corelli, whose bowing seems made
For a hand with a jewel

October

1
somewhere a Continuity
Girl calls
preparing us
for the final frames'
chiaroscuro
and the cast's names
which lead us back
to the opening scene

2
Nobody answers.
Lead. Bullet. With names
Such as these
The sleep is deep and long.

3
Everything had a name, but although every name was nothing without the thing named, the thing cared nothing for its name, had no need of a name, and was itself only. And then there were the names that signified no substantial thing, as linden and tree signified that dark dancer.

4
A shoal
of names
in nets
of rain

5
With the finest of mapping pens he fondly traces
All the family names on the familiar places.

6
The tenth visitor
Is not usually named.

November

1
A silent, dim, distanceless, steaming, rotting day in March. The last brown oak-leaf which had stood out the winter's frost spun and quivered plump down, and then lay; as if ashamed to have broken for a moment the ghastly stillness, like an awkward guest at a great dumb dinner-party. A cold suck of wind just proved its existence, by toothaches on the north side of all faces.

2
The rawish danke of clumzie winter ramps
The fluent summers vaine: and drizzling sleete
Chilleth the wan bleak cheek of the numd earth,
Whilst snarling gusts nibble the juyceles leaves,
From the nak't shuddring branch

3
A smoking swamp before a cottage door;
A drowned dog bobbing to a soleless shoe;
A broken wash-tub, with its ragged staves
Swimming and ducking to a battered hat,
Whenever the wind stirs the reedy slime

4
Black rose the clouds, and now, (as in a dream)
Their reddening shapes, transformed to Warrior-hosts,
Coursed o'er the sky, and battled in mid-air.
Nor did not the large blood-drops fall from Heaven
Portentous! while aloft were seen to float,
Like hideous features looming on the mist,
Wan stains of ominous light!

5
All was black,
In heaven no single star, on earth no track;
A brooding hush without a stir or note,
The air so thick it clotted in my throat

6
There in the starless dark, the poise, the hover,
There with vast wings across the canceled skies,
There in the sudden blackness the black pall
Of nothing, nothing, nothing — nothing at all.

December

1
Nine years ago I killed the ivy:
But once more it swarms the ancient wall
Round my plot. It has grown top-heavy
And rank, too much for the bricks to bear

2
Down with the Baies & mistletoe:
Down with the Holly, Ivie, all,
Wherewith ye drest the Christmas Hall

3
As the holly groweth green
With ivy all alone,
When flowerès cannot be seen
And green wood leaves be gone.

4
every brass candlestick had its chaplet, every copper saucepan and preserving-pan had its wreath of shining berries and leaves, through the hall, which was a bower of green, to the two parlours which were festooned and hung with holly and boughs of fir, and ivy berries dipped in red raddle, left over from sheep marking.

5
The wall must be crumbled, the stone decayed
To pleasure his dainty whim:
And the mouldering dust that years have made
Is a merry meal for him.
Creeping where no life is seen,
A rare old plant is the Ivy green.

6
I pity trees that all their life
Have ivy for a wife
Or with dark mistletoe they bear
Keep Christmas through the year.

Answers

JANUARY
1. James Simmons: Art and Reality stanza 1.
2. Kipling: My Rival stanza 1.
3. Dryden: 'Love Triumphant' - Song for a Girl. Last stanza
4. Phyllis MacGinley: Portrait of a Girl with Comic Book
5. Sheridan: School for Scandal Act III sc. iii.
6. Matthew Sweeney: Boy with a Rod

FEBRUARY
1. David Wright: Those walks we Took
2. Gillian Clarke: Kingfishers at Condat
3. W. Somerset Maugham: Neil MacAdam
4. David Holbrook: A Walk by the river with my Daughter
5. Robert Lowell: Colloquy in Black Rock
6. A.Y. Campbell: There are Still Kingfishers

MARCH
1. James Fenton: The Ballad of the Birds
2. Heaney: A New Song
3. Sir Thomas Browne: Pseudodoxia Epidemica Bk 3 chap X
4 Theodore Roethke: The Rose
5. T.S. Eliot: Burnt Norton IV
6. Amy Clampitt: The Kingfisher

APRIL
1. Kilvert: Diary, 13th July 1875
2. Dodie Smith: I capture the Castle Chapter XII,
3. Paul Durcan: Self-Portrait, Nude with Steering Wheel.
4. Prior: Truth and Falsehood
5. Gwen Raverat: Period Piece. Propriety.
6. Thomas Randolph: On 6 Cambridge maids bathing themselves by Queen's College, June 15th 1629

MAY
1. Keats: Sonnet - On Hearing the Bag-pipe.....
2. Whittier: The Pipes at Lucknow stanza 2
3. Tomlinson: Mr. Brodsky
4. K. Raine: For the Visitors' Book
5. Shakespeare: Merchant of Venice IV sc. i.
6. E. Sitwell: The Sleeping Beauty 26

JUNE
1. Dyer: The Fleece Book III
2. Frost: The Need of Being Versed in Country Things
3. Lee: Cider with Rosie Chap 1.
4. Hughes: Gaudete - Prologue
5. Bunting: Chomei at Toyama
6. Henley: Echoes XII stanza 1

JULY
1. Shapcott: The Mad Cow Talks Back
2. Mary Shelley: Frankenstein Letter 4
3. Ian Hamilton: Midwinter
4. Patric Dickinson: Acknowledge Time stanza 5
5. Thoreau: Walden - The Pond in Winter
6. Constantine: Cold Night

AUGUST
1. Eiléan Ni Chuilleanáin: Evidence stanza 1
2. Patricia Beer: Port Royal, Jamaica
3. May Kendall: Lay of the Trilobite 4
4. Alfred Noyes: The Rock Pool stanza v.
5. Marianne Moore: The Fish st. 5
6. William Carlos Williams: All that is Perfect in Woman final stanza

SEPTEMBER
1. Auden: Lines addressed to Dr. Claude Jenkins, Canon of Christ Church.....
2. Wm. Cartwright: A New-Year's gift to Brian Lord Bishop of Sarum.....
3. Sydney Smith: Letter to Archdeacon Hale Dec. 20th 1840
4. Wallace Stevens: Notes Towards a Supreme Fiction. It Must Change VI.
5. Earle Birney: A Small Faculty Stag for the Visiting Poet.
6. Stevie Smith: Novel on Yellow Paper (127)

OCTOBER
1. R. S. Thomas: Countering
2. Mallalieu: Lament for a Lost Life
3. Keith Douglas: A Round Number
4. Poe: The Masque of the Red Death
5. Eliz. Bishop: Paris, 7 a.m.
6. Sandburg: Clocks

NOVEMBER
1. Townsend Warner: The Fifth of November
2. Scannell: After the Fireworks
3. Pryce-Jones: London Siren st. 2
4. F. Cornford: Anagram for Guy Fawkes Night
5. John Press: Guy Fawkes Night Cambridge 1957. St. 2
6. Reeves: Fireworks final stanza

DECEMBER
1. Hugo Williams: Tides
2. Adrienne Rich: The Trees
3. Sue Stewart: Serendipity stanza 4
4. McGuckian: The Dowry Murder
5. Plath: The Ghost's Leavetaking
6. Mary Maria Colling: The Moon and the Cloud

COVER: Beddoes: Torrismond Act I sc. ii 26-30

Marks and Prizes

730 Elspeth Christie (ineligible for a prize)
730 Pamela Thompson (ineligible for a prize)
730 Brian Jordan (ineligible for a prize)

1st Prize
730 Sarah Woodman and Philip Hearsum

2nd Prize
725 Ben Vizoskie

3rd Prize
720 Alison Sheehan-Hunt

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710 Ian Patterson
695 Jenny Naish
630 Charles Nugent
620 Sue Bird
578 Gli Amici
571 Janet Woodhead
570 June Walker
550 Sabina and Chloe Sutherland
540 Frances Hughes and Angela Buckley
538 W.A. Kyle
465 Rosemary Johnson
450 Michael and Carolyn Greet
440 Steve Osborn
435 Mary Milne-Day, Sarah Price, Anne Willitts
420 Kenneth Thornton
370 Mrs. C. Pearce
345 Joan and Jo Lampen
250 Alan Langley
245 Tom Durham
240 Florence Yarwood
160 The Mossfield Gang
150 Davie Dolan Jnr.
125 Val Marshall-George
70 Nell Mirante

REMARKS

It is becoming rather too frequent that I should begin with apologies. Perhaps I should apologise for that as well but my self-abasement does know some bounds. I apologise, therefore, most humbly and heartily to Alan Langley for omitting his marks not only last year but the year before as well. I have neither reason nor excuse. I don't know why it happened and I can not therefore guard against it happening again. I would kneel, penitently, only then I should not be able to reach the keyboard. I also managed to misplace some of Carolyn Greet's marks. Her complaint was little more than a kindly whisper, but I am sorry that it happened. Will I take more care this year? Frankly, I doubt it. I always take care, but these things happen because (although this will be news to some) I am human. No, sorry: I can't prove it.

One of the best things to have happened since the production of the last almanac was a short stay here in Pocklington by Gabriel Baugniet's husband Phillip. We ate, drank and were merry and tempered our merriment with reminiscences of Gabriel and stories about the whole family. It was a splendid couple of days (would that the politicians had been there to hear how to put the world to rights) and it was made even more splendid by his generous offer for which I need your assistance.

He would like to give a substantial prize in order to attract younger people to Nemo – something which found an echo in my bosom as I am sure you will have no difficulty in understanding. G. Ingli James, citing the problems of age, has all but retired and Caroline Heal left her entry too late and has gone abroad on holiday, as have quite a few others. When I edited my first Nemo there were 77 entries; this year there were 30, and that includes one from Charles Nugent who had not submitted anything for 19 years. We are all ageing and our eyes are dimming and we desperately need a younger clientele, but how do we do it? How can we contact the younger generation and persuade them of the joys of the chase without using their beloved internet? Nemo is not easy if one eschews the electronic and it tests the patience of those who, like many of the young, want success immediately. Well? What do we do? Answers on a postcard, please, or in a letter, or by email, or carrier pigeon or by any other means.

Very creditable scoring this year even though some said it was a difficult one, and a laugh or two especially at the poor trilobite which evolved into a tribolate and a tribolite. If it were not extinct it would have died of embarrassment.

Let me clear up a couple of questions which I have answered before but obviously not very clearly. Yes, if you guess that a certain quotation is from The Ring and the Book, say, and you haven't got a copy, by all means find it and read it on the internet – that is simply to use the net as a library. What you don't do is google the quotation but rather the answer you have thought likely. And, no, you don't have to include the panel with your answers. Nearly all of you realised this, even though that particular admonishment had not been at the time excised from the rules. I have also been asked to include more prose in Nemo, but as you must realise, the next one (this one you are reading now) had already been sent to the printer and it was impossible to comply. I shall put it into my mind but make no promises because I know many of you will shrink at the thought.

At one stage during the marking process, my wife removed everything from the table in order to get on with her dressmaking. There was an unfortunate spillage on the floor and a slightly confused heap elsewhere, so I apologise in advance for any misplaced scripts or lack of answers returned. I do try to answer letters but seldom manage it; and this year I have been extra busy finishing novels, TV scripts and trying to get back into writing acceptable poetry, so it has been even more difficult than usual. I'm sorry.

If any of you are novel readers, my first should be out in the spring and is, I hope, both touching and funny. It is entitled A Little Touch of Harry; a quotation that none of you will have any difficulty in identifying. Harry is about to be cremated at the opening but still has every other chapter devoted to his musings and (I hope) amusings. His great-nephew, Thom, has been left his house if he wants it and is staying there while rehearsing King Lear in the local theatre. Now read on...

I don't know if this year's Nemo is any easier or much more fiendish, but here it is and I wish you all the very best of luck.

Notices

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'There is nothing,' said the Water Rat, 'absolutely nothing half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.'

'Well,' said the Mole timidly, 'there's Nemo.'

'In the luncheon basket.' continued Ratty, 'you'll find cold chicken, coldtonguecoldham coldbeefpickledgherkinssaladfrenchrollsgingerbeerlemonade...'

'Wonderful,' said Mole, 'but in Nemo there's angels and seeds and kisses, composers, fish and,' he sighed gently, 'home.'

'Sounds a bit dull,' said Ratty.

'Oh, there's more than that!' exclaimed Mole. 'Shakespeare characters, holly and ivy, giraffes...'

'Well, be a good fellow and tell me what it's all about,' said Rat.

'I wish I could,' murmured Mole. 'But if you send £3 to **Nigel Forde, the Gate House, Burnby Lane, POCKLINGTON YO42 1UL** or £10 if you want four almanacs, you can mess about in libraries.'

'So this is a competition?'

'*The* competition,' corrected the Mole.